



WISEWOMAN

Success Story 9 Nebraska WISEWOMAN Program Tailors Smoking Cessation Intervention to the Women It Serves

Location Nebraska

Focus Provide *Every Woman Matters* participants with a lifestyle intervention program that includes a tobacco cessation concentration in addition to the concentrations focusing on nutrition and physical activity.

Strategy *Every Woman Matters* partnered with the Tobacco Free Nebraska Program to identify community resources that help women quit smoking and to determine which of these resources is most helpful. *Every Woman Matters* then hosted a series of focus groups to solicit women's input face-to-face about smoking cessation services and other lifestyle interventions.

Early Successes *Every Woman Matters* plans to use the focus group research to improve its lifestyle interventions and related materials. By partnering with the Tobacco Free Nebraska Program and an independent contractor, *Every Woman Matters* was able to determine ways to better serve its clients.

Both *Every Woman Matters* and the Tobacco Free Nebraska Program will be able to use the focus group research to improve smoking cessation services.

For More Information Michelle L. Heffelfinger
WISEWOMAN Project Coordinator
Every Woman Matters Program
Office of Women's Health
301 Centennial Mall South
P.O. Box 94817
Lincoln, NE 68509-4817
Phone: 402-471-0595
E-mail: michelle.heffelfinger@hhss.state.ne.us

Nebraska WISEWOMAN Program Tailors Smoking Cessation Intervention to the Women It Serves

By talking with women face-to-face and soliciting their opinions about smoking cessation programs, Nebraska is gathering valuable information that will strengthen lifestyle interventions and help in the development of educational materials to help women quit smoking.

Tobacco cessation is just one area of focus within the lifestyle intervention component of Nebraska's *Every Woman Matters* Program. The *Every Woman Matters* Program integrates the WISEWOMAN component as well as breast and cervical screening services under one name. Nutrition and physical activity are also an area of concentration for women participating in the WISEWOMAN screening and intervention activities. Staff from several outreach agencies contact women to engage them in the intervention process, contacting them for 6 consecutive months. Monthly contacts serve as an opportunity to offer encouragement, to promote goal setting, and to ensure clients are accessing all of the benefits offered by the *Every Woman Matters* Program.

When the Nebraska Tobacco QuitLine lost funding and was no longer available in May 2004 to serve WISEWOMAN participant smoking cessation needs, *Every Woman Matters* turned to a long-standing partner, the Tobacco Free Nebraska Program. Both partners agreed on the need to help women quit smoking but wanted to ask their clients which cessation resources would be most helpful. In addition, *Every Woman Matters* wanted client input to help strengthen core public education and intervention activities.

They opted to use focus groups as a means of collecting information and assessing opinions about program activities. *Every Woman Matters* conducted 10 focus groups in the six regions of the state. Host communities were both rural and urban, and participants represented minority and ethnic populations of Nebraska, women recently screened, and women who have participated in WISEWOMAN activities.

The *Every Woman Matters* Program, utilizing approved program dollars, contracted with a firm well versed in focus group research. The contractor, in conjunction with program staff, recruited participants, developed an effective discussion guide, and facilitated the groups across Nebraska. In addition to including tobacco cessation questions, the discussion guide addressed program outreach materials, rescreening materials and incentives, and interventions. A total of 17 questions were asked of each group, and women had a chance to comment on the effectiveness of materials that promote program activities, including those that encourage women to return for an annual rescreening. Women had an opportunity to

evaluate draft materials designed to motivate them to continue using program services and to indicate which lifestyle intervention activities they found most helpful. Participants were asked to share approximately an hour and a half of their time for focus group discussion.

The responses related to tobacco cessation will help *Every Woman Matters* and the Tobacco Free Nebraska Program determine which cessation resources and activities will be most helpful to Nebraska women. The contracted facilitator engaged women in dialogue about whether they had used the Nebraska QuitLine, what other cessation resources they had used, and what services they would like to see in their communities to help them be successful with their cessation efforts.

Importance of Success

A final analysis of the focus group research was completed in late fall 2004. "When we received the discussion analysis, the program looked for common themes, concerns, and suggestions to help us evaluate and improve interventions and materials," says Cathy Dillon, the Lifestyle Intervention Coordinator for *Every Woman Matters*. "We value our clients' input, and we are hoping they can help us identify areas where we need to make positive changes." Results related to tobacco cessation resources and activities will be shared with the Tobacco Free Nebraska Program.

As focus groups were organized and conducted, the Tobacco Free Nebraska Program was planning three conferences designed to engage communities in developing resources to help women with their tobacco cessation efforts. *Every Woman Matters* staff partnered in the conference planning process (see Success Story 12, page 41). Both partners will use the focus group research and conference outcomes to better serve women who are trying to stop smoking.

Lessons Learned

- An independent contractor is ideal for conducting focus groups. The contractor is an objective third party in the information-gathering process—someone women can speak candidly with about the *Every Woman Matters* Program.
- Make full use of the independent contractor's expertise. By hiring a contractor to manage the focus groups, you allow program staff to use their time to keep the program running.
- Evaluation findings, in particular those gathered from clients, can serve to strengthen program and partnership efforts.

